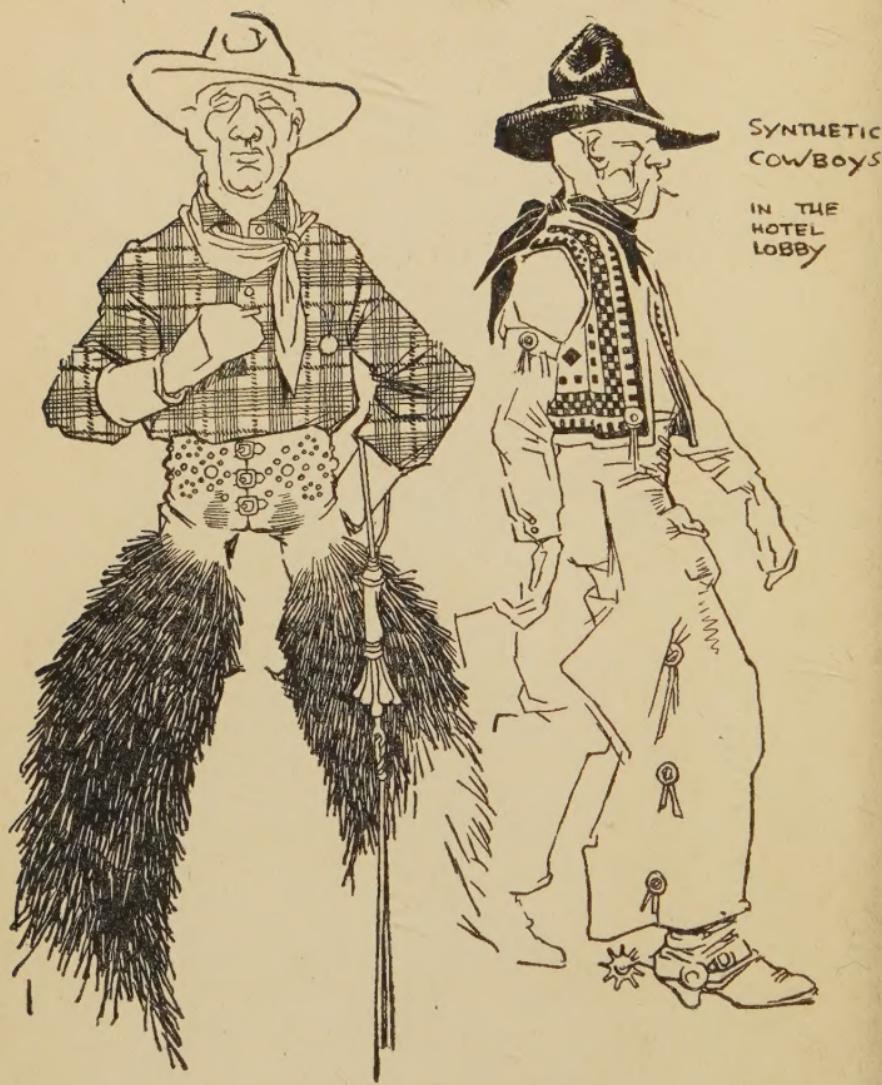




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Olive Bush

On the Trail in Yellowstone



SYNTHETIC
COWBOYS

IN THE
HOTEL
LOBBY

ON THE TRAIL IN YELLOWSTONE

By

WALLACE SMITH

WITH SKETCHES BY THE AUTHOR



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"To
Mom"



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On the Trail in Yellowstone

On Yellowstone Trails

I

PACK TRAIN REVEILLE

“**H**i, there, Jenny! You needle-nosed, tangle-footed, slab-sided, goat-faced darling! I’ll bust you wide open in the place where your brains ought to be! Hi, there!”

Mule language is a matter of volume and intonation as well as mere vocabulary. And Carl, who is our wrangler, speaks mule very fluently.

It is the pack train reveille. The sun hasn’t yet climbed the Eastern slope of the lavender-misted hills. There is still

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the mysterious hush of night in the shadows of the big, knotted trees. The air is crisp and chilly—the warm blood of the day has not yet started to circulate. There has been a frost that has left fairy lace on the ferns, the coarse grass, on the edge of the cold, clear creek. And a numb feeling on outdoor noses.

It's very comfortable under the blankets. The ground that seemed so harsh and hard last night is friendly now. One can almost snuggle into it. And whoever would have thought that a pair of boots crossed under the head would make such a wonderful pillow? For that matter, whoever would have thought that one could get used so quickly to sleeping "full pack," as they say in the army—with most of the clothes on? Surely not the Cotton Broker, whose civilized clothes in his most casual moment look like a

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

carefully-selected page out of "What the Well-Dressed Man Should Wear."

Drowsy thoughts. It's so entrancingly easy to close the eyes and drop forty fathoms into sleep again at once——

Surely this moment is the best in a camping trip off the trail——

But it's broken. Jenny has refused to "hi, there." And the General is up. He just seems to pop out of the blankets with no regard for the stolen forty winks. He's out to help Carl make Jenny "hi, there" whether she likes it or not.

The General also desires the rest of his army to "hi, there." He has been successful in his own peaked tent, to judge from the mutinous sounds coming from Mrs. General and Dave, who is just past ten and the General's son.

The Cotton Broker and Ralph, twelve, the Cotton Broker's son, are

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snoozing beautifully under their light-green lean-to, which glistens with its coating of frost like a holiday card sprinkled with isinglass dust. The Artist is burrowed deep under the poncho shelter which makes his sleeping place.

The General speaks to this division of his army. He speaks almost in mule. And gets about the same results as Carl with Jenny.

“Get up!” cries the General. “We are late now. Here it is, almost sun-up. And everyone still asleep!”

During the rest of the day the General is a very pleasant, likable chap. In the morning he is a cold, stern man. Grumbles from the army. Most unmilitary replies to the General. He is told to go chase himself. And other things.

“Surely,” protests the Cotton Broker



*Hobbles are stiff and hard
to handle in the cold of
early morning*

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

opening one sleepy eye, "surely the great, open spaces cannot be open at this ghastly hour!"

The General smiles. He has an excellent trick.

"All right, sleep on," he says. "Only if we don't get started we'll never reach Pelican Creek where the big trout are."

That's enough for the Cotton Broker and Ralphie. They are up and dressing like a pair of firemen responding to a four-alarm alarm. The Cotton Broker owns a rod that is like a magic wand, delicate and graceful and slim.

The Artist merely grunts and burrows deeper under the poncho.

"Go on, catch your little fish!" he says, scornfully and defiantly. He is not a fisherman—yet. "Artists are above such petty things as little fish on a hook. Artists should be aloof."

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The General still smiles. He has another trick. He plays it when he has reached the cook's fire, where Cruse Black, one of the greatest camp cooks that ever made pan bread, is engaged in his mysteries.

"Come and get it!" calls the General.
"Breakfast is ready!"

The aloof artist bursts from his blankets like Old Faithful storming out of its crater. Straight up into the air and roaring with action. He is running toward Cruse Black's fire before his feet have hit the ground.

"And a cup o' coffee!" he sings out as he charges.

Even an aloof artist soul may be excused for stampeding in the direction of Cruse Black's cooking.

There is a good deal of bogus sentimentality about camp meals. Back in

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town, the perspective of time eliminates the memory of burned pans, greasy bacon, dishwater coffee, flapjacks that have the consistency for which tire manufacturers strive—

But not with Cruse Black. This simple record is put down just after one of Cruse Black's meals. Our table manners are after the best rules laid down for catch-as-catch-can wrestling. Ladies first—if the lady is nearest the dish. Requests for passing plates meet with the deferential: “What's the matter? Is your arm broke?” We represent what is wrong with this picture very thoroughly in our meals eaten in the style made popular by the great Roman arbiter, Al Fresco.

II

“THE COMMISSARIAT CAM-U-EL”—WITH EARS

THREE'S no one enjoys a pack-train trip more than the mules. No other event in the crowded life of the mule seems to afford it such opportunity for mulish devilment and continual, unholy delight.

The long, stern chase in the morning; the daily wrestling match before the packs are diamond-hitched; the coquettish refusal to take the trail or stay on it after taking; the patient wait for just the right moment to buck off a pack; rolling in the dust or pretending to stumble in mid-

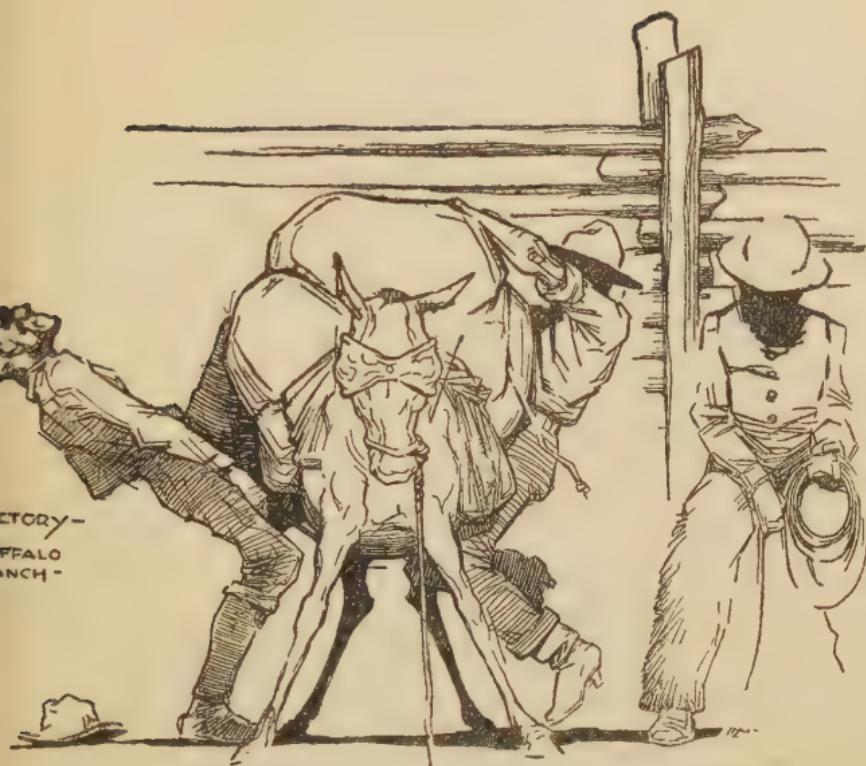
ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

stream; another chase at sundown to remove the packs; a night devoted to long range hide-and-seek——

Great—for the mules! The wonder is that a pack-train of mules ever gets anywhere at all. It wouldn't, if the mule wasn't a sportsman at heart and a high class humorist to boot. He is not a selfish, stubborn beast. He is merely playful.

Just as soon as he has had his sport—and the whole camp is perspiring and saying unforgiveable things and fifty minutes late getting away—the mule is satisfied. And, the chances are, with a meek and wondering expression he will quietly come in and stand while the mule-skinner eases the daily burden on to his tough back.

Our pack-train was organized overnight. Its members were four mules, Lena, eight riding animals and Day



*"The daily wrestling
match before the
packs are diamond
hitched"*

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School, the colt. They were organized by Cruse Black, with Carl as first mate, under the instructions of Horace Albright of Yellowstone.

Not one member of the outfit, except Day School and the mare, its parent, had met before. Neither had Cruse and Carl.

But did the mules display a churlish spirit? Did they act in a manner that was haughty and reserved? By no means. They were duly appreciative of the fact that Cruse and Carl were making considerable personal sacrifice to provide them with diversion and healthy, outdoor recreation.

They entered into the festivities with a whole heart. Not even the driving rain that stormed down the Lamar River could dampen their ardor. "That night," as they say in the movie sub-titles, the whole outfit began their merry game.

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

They cavorted under the leadership of a jolly, black-hided demon—he's been called worse since.

They scattered toward Bison Peak; toward Soda Butte, Fossil Forest way and Tower Falls. Yoicks and away! Robin Hood and his merry men. All night long. Rough country on a pitchy night—

At breakfast time Cruse and Carl had most of them back. Not until late in the afternoon was the black leader satisfied that Cruse and Carl were weary of the sport.

We saw them first at sundown when we were waiting at Buffalo Ranch to get under way. Behind us lay a week of luxurious sight-seeing in Yellowstone Park—the civilized part of it, thick with hotels, camps, and campers, autos and tourists. Before us lay alluring weeks of

MULE BUCKING
OFF PACK —



*"There were two
or three playful
stampedes"*

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

the open trail in the country to the south, within the Park and out of it—a blessed country of no roads, and few visitors. An undisturbed fairyland of mountains, rivers and forests, all populated with wild life like a vast unfettered zoo.

That first night, as we greeted them, the mules marched by with smiles on their velvet faces. They lifted their slim, beautiful legs in conscious pride. Their bodies were sleek as seals'.

In the corral the newly-organized train made scarcely any bother, at all. Of course, the black mule kicked a hay wagon out of shape. And Jenny playfully tried to assassinate Jimmy Dupuis, the ranger who came to guide us on our first day. And another broke his packharness to scattered remnants. And there were two or three playful stampedes.

But from that moment on the train

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

considered itself acquainted and organized
—and it was.

So is the Black Hand.

Lena was a great source of worry to us. The other pack animals proper were mules. Lena wasn't. They said she was a mare. In many respects she had that appearance. But then again she bore a striking resemblance to some prehistoric, amphibian monster.

The General said as much. He said it with syllables. The General is a very learned man. He and Carl were viewing Lena with considerable alarm as we headed down the trail toward Cache Creek, our first real outdoor camp.

“She reminds me,” said the General, “of the great *Corythosaurus* of the Cretaceous period.”

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

Carl appeared dazed but remained in the saddle.

“Except,” the General continued, “that scientists agree that the what-you-m’-call-’em I just mentioned had a lofty cranium.”

“It’s hard to tell what she is,” said Carl, “but it’s easy to tell what she isn’t —which is a packhorse.”

It was generally felt that Lena would perish miserably on the march. She didn’t. Not that at any time, except in sight of water, Lena became what might be called vivacious. On the contrary, she exhibited an unconcern for the party that was the last word in philosophic detachment.

Carrying the grub boxes, her approach down the trail sounded a good deal like a battleship going into dry-dock. She had a gait that started out to be what horse-

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

men call a rack but ended up in a sidling, sprawling stumble that horsemen called something else.

Patiently Lena would seek out two trees so close together that both she and the grub boxes could not get through. That did not discourage Lena. Uncomplainingly, she would wedge herself between the trees and do her best. Until Carl or some one else "hi, there'd" her out of it.

As is the way with patient, uncomplaining people, Lena became the target of the party's worst moods. There was always the relief of thwacking her ancient flanks with a strap quirt and yelling.

There was Gunpowder, the blue horse; Pola Negri, the Artist's mount; Black Beauty, the Cotton Broker's sorrel; Day School, Jenny—all great animals.



LAZY
LENA

*Lena carried the
grub boxes*

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

To the two youngsters, Dave and Ralphie, they were all the great horses of legend. As, when the boys took the saddle in the open country, they received the heritage of all the great riders who ever galloped across the pages of history and fiction.

It took more mature minds really to appreciate the mules. Smiling, mischievous philosophers, taking life at its full measure.

A sentimentalist has wept over the hybrid mule: "He has no pride of ancestry and no hope of posterity."

The mule doesn't weep. He takes his fun as he finds it. He may not have a hope of Heaven, either. But he finds one here—on a pack-train trip, bucking the pack-kit off a two-foot trail over a dizzy precipice.

III

WILD ANIMALS WE TRIED TO AVOID MEETING

AT Buffalo Ranch we learned some rather amazing statistics about the buffalo which we, in common with some other millions of Americans, fancied was just about faded out of the picture.

The tame herd of buffalos—they call them “tame”—began with twenty animals in 1920. In the Fall of 1922 they had increased to about six hundred. Even the “wild herd,” which does not enjoy the advantage of being kept under fence in winter, and hay fodder, the care of a

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

veterinarian and the rest of it, increased from thirty-seven animals to sixty-seven in five years.

But this is not a record of statistics. In the midst of Superintendent Lacomb's discourse anent buffalo, we turned a corral corner and were shocked at the sight of a horse—a very miserable-looking horse. A great, raw wound ripped through hide and flesh and reached the bone at his shoulder. The sort of sickening wound common in the bull ring, where blindfolded horses are urged on to the horns of frantic, maddened bulls.

"You can't tell about a bull buffalo," said Lacomb. "They're right mean sometimes. Especially the tame ones."

One of the "tame" ones, a huge bull, had turned on one of the mounted ranch hands. The rider had escaped. Not the horse.

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Our party considered gravely. Our trail went through the buffalo country, the feeding ground of the wild herd.

“Strange what a refining influence the human animal has on his dumb brethren,” remarked the Artist. “The bears in the Park are spoiled by the tourists and changed from sunny-tempered, guileless creatures into sore-headed, ugly, vicious brutes. And observe what happens to the disposition of the buffalo, or American bison.”

“Oh, rather!” returned the Cotton Broker, which, with him, was an emotional outburst.

At the same time he went carefully through his pockets. It had become a nervous habit with him. Those bear stories! In spite of the assurance of park statistics, the Cotton Broker viewed gloomily the prospect of interviewing a

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bear who had scented some sweetmeat on his person.

He was always making sure that he hadn't inadvertently slipped a pound of lump sugar or a box of chocolates into his pocket.

"Laugh if you will," he said. "This business of referring fondly to wild animals one has met is all right for those who care for that sort of thing. I am not one of these. I desire to state that any wild animals I meet will have to force an introduction on me."

Two days later our party was riding against the theatrical backdrop made by Saddle Mountain, rearing ten thousand feet to the clouds to the East of us. We were near the shelter cabin which stands at the junction of the Lamar River and Cold Creek.

We were coming out of a bit of tangled



*The sometimes almost-too-friendly
Yellowstone bear*

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

brush into a clearing in the woods. Across the clearing swept a flood of brilliant sun—

A shout from Cruse Black, leading the train. Another from Ralphie, riding the mare. A clattering of the bell hung around Day School's scrawny neck.

“Buffalo!” cried Cruse. “Right on the trail and madder’n a hornet!”

A flash of gray and crimson shot along our left flank with a drumming of eager hoofs. Ranger Jimmy Dupuis! He had just been telling the Artist that the rear cargadore with pack trains got \$5 more a month—

Jimmy’s gray horse, with its crimson saddle blanket, swept forward. The General spurred his horse to Jimmy’s side.

There was the buffalo. A tremendous infuriated bull. His shaggy head was



In which Ranger Dupuis diverts the buffalo's attention

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

down. The huge bulk of his mighty shoulders was hunched in back of it. His forelegs kicked up the dust in angry alternations. Madder'n a hornet? He was madder'n a bull buffalo.

A buffalo is formidable enough, marked "Bison-Habitat America" behind a steel fence in the Zoo. He had been a terrifying object in the great corrals back at Buffalo Ranch. But out here in the open, with nothing between us and his horns but a sweep of sunlight——

Face to face, the buffalo was a bellowing Minotaur. There was a savage gleam in his wicked little eyes. A monster out of a forgotten age——

Jimmy Dupuis galloped toward the buffalo. Even Cruse Black, who has hunted big game from the Snake River to Alaska, held his breath as he drove straight at the enraged bull——

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

A few feet apart, Jimmy yelled and waved his arms. With a snort, the buffalo bull wheeled clumsily and made for the timber. We all saw that he limped. One of his hind legs was hurt.

“That’s luck,” said Cruse. “Otherwise he might hold the trail all day. Let me tell you, I’ll give a buffalo all the room he wants. Or a bear. One time when I was snowshoeing along Pelican Creek

”

The Cotton Broker was going through his pockets again.

“Do you suppose,” he queried, “that buffalos like sugar?”

It had been a real thrill——

There were many real thrills in the days that followed. Dave and Ralphie, who kept diaries after a fashion, began to list the animals they saw each day. Their lists, until diary-writing became

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

less of a fad and more of an ordeal, read like a complete review of animal life in North America.

Elk, moose, antelope, deer, grizzlies, brown bear—in the three weeks of our journey we saw more big game than most hunters with a rifle see in their lives. The joy of “hunting” for the sheer pleasure of looking on animals in their native haunts, moving with all the breath-taking grace of their kind, has been told too often to repeat. But that joy we had.

It was a revelation to see the Cotton Broker, after his scoffing at wild animals, stalking like an Indian to get a closer view of an antelope herd. Or the General, who for years has known the grim trails that are travelled hunting for “meat,” trying for an hour to work to windward of a suspicious doe.

It was a comment on the temper of our

GRIZZLY



*Here and there, in and about
Yellowstone, the grizzlies
appear to pay their re-
spects — if you're will-
ing to wait for them*

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

expedition that the whole train would be halted and signalled into a reverent silence rather than frighten a deer family timidly yet confidently crossing a stream.

We decided, just incidentally, after watching a moose household lumbering clumsily through a swamp, their ugly snouts sniffing danger-scented air, that no huntsman with a sense of humor could ever kill a moose.

There came before the end of the trail a feeling of natural kinship with the fleet, more beautiful animals, that never can come through the sights of a killing rifle. A rifle that would wipe out forever the graceful line of a running deer, the poised splendor of a watching antelope—

The Artist was speaking of this one sundown at Shoshone Lake, as he and the Cotton Broker watched the unbelievable blue of that beautiful water.

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“Oh, rather,” said the Cotton Broker, in that way he has. “What you say is true, of course. It’s like all of us being part of one great family. I feel that. And yet——” the Cotton Broker absentedly went through his pockets again——“in most families there are some relatives who are not always welcome. Who are, you might say, pests.

“I refer,” he continued, “to the buffalo bull on an off-day and the bear who, besides his fondness for sugar, is no doubt carnivorous, if you will pardon a somewhat ostentatious word.”

To the last the Cotton Broker slept as far away as he could from the grub-boxes, the favorite objective of marauding bears.

IV

IKE WALTON CLAIMS ANOTHER VICTIM

THREE must have been a wild and abandoned air about our party. Perhaps it was our habit of bursting into song on the slightest pretext. Or on no pretext, at all. Perhaps it was the urge of the Cotton Broker, to pop into impassed dances. Perhaps the presence of the Artist—you know these artists with their carefree, bohemian ways.

Or, most convincing “perhaps” of all, it was our luggage. Quite an assortment. To watch it being dumped from one of Billy Nichols’ big yellow automobiles on to the veranda of the Mammoth hotel was to

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know how Pandora felt when she opened the special delivery parcel-post package. With our luggage we resembled to a great extent a group of recent arrivals at Ellis Island. Or the victims of a fire who had escaped with the first things they could lay their hands on.

There was that about us that rather pointed up the hospitality of the park officials. A level-eyed ranger was forever showing up, to announce in a quiet voice that he had been sent by the General's good friend Horace Albright, Superintendent of the Park, to see that we were comfortable and contented.

We don't say that this was done because we had that air about us. We just set it down as part of a truthful record.

And all this preliminary to the casual introduction of our luggage. It is neces-

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sary to approach the subject discreetly. But it is really mentioned just to place it in a literary way at Pelican Creek. Here, as it was being unlaced from the backs of the mules and spread out, the General and the Cotton Broker exclaimed at once: "Where's your rod?"

"No guns are allowed in the park," replied the Artist, who is a slangy person at heart.

"No, no—your rod," and the General pantomimed a cast.

"You mean a fishing pole?" asked the Artist.

The General and the Cotton Broker shuddered.

"I am not a fisherman," the Artist replied. "Not that I revile you especially for being fishermen. No, sir. Every man to his own notion of pleasure, whether it's cutting out paper dolls or

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endowing libraries. I do not seek to reform you to my way of thinking.

“But personally I fish not, neither do I angle. It’s very silly, in my estimation. I never could see the percentage of getting all dressed up in Fisherman’s Disguise No. 3, debating over an album of synthetic insects and sneaking up on some moron fish with a trusting disposition.”

The others had turned away and were busy joining rods, fastening leaders and attaching reels. It made no difference to the Artist. He continued:

“I’d get a better thrill casting in the ice-box for a can of sardines and landing them with a Eureka Handy Kitchen Tool, combining the features of both can-opener and egg-beater.

“Another thing about fishing is the talk of the enthusiast. The fisherman is a worse bore than a new golfer——”

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The General and the Cotton Broker were already on their way down the serpentine length of the Pelican. With them went Ralphie and Dave, fisher sons of fisherman fathers.

“I will attend this ridiculous ceremony,” said the Artist as he joined them, “merely to observe the alleged mental processes of those we are in the habit of calling human beings.”

Well, it was one of those days. The Cotton Broker’s slim, graceful rod sang a little song as it bent through the air. The weapon of the General was whipping in earnest with a long, beautiful back swing and a precise dropping in shadowy pools and near trapped logs and rocks.

“Perhaps the wild fish of the Yellowstone do not recognize the effete tactics of the Eastern fishmonger, if that is the word,” commented the Artist after a



THE GENERAL
FISHES FROM
THE SADDLE—

A fisherman on horseback

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

dozen fruitless casts. "The chances are these unlettered fish have not seen the sporting goods catalogue which says that the Dowagiac Wiggler lands the big trout. It's all very——"

Wham! Out from a sullen group of rocks shot a dull streak of gray. A vicious tug at the General's line and the flash of a gleaming, struggling trout, furious and fighting and in a froth of whipped foam.

Wham! The Cotton Broker's line tautened and whizzed through the water, writing behind it a swift scribble of ripples.

Dave and Ralphie broke into cheers. The Artist hurried up. He flung himself flat on the ground to watch, over the edge of the bank, the struggles of the fish. Only once he recovered himself sufficiently to speak:

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“Go it fish!” he called, and to the Cotton Broker, whose strike he was encouraging: “It’s a sporting event, you claim, and I feel the fish should have some support.”

“They’ll need it,” muttered the Cotton Broker. The General very patiently coaxed his quarry to a pebbly bend. There, with expert hands, he floated it to a landing. A three-pound, speckled beauty.

The Cotton Broker made his haul a second later. A twin to the General’s catch. They cast again. A minute later the General distinguished himself landing two fish on one leader. The Cotton Broker, as he killed his third fish, asked the Artist to hold his rod a minute.

“Quite a bit of grace, at that, in casting,” admitted the Artist. “I ought to be good at it.”

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“Oh, rather!” said the Cotton Broker. The Artist splashed the line into the creek.

Wham! A hungry husky of the stream snatched the lure and started away with it.

“Help!” shouted the Artist. “A fish got me!”

“Land him!” ordered the Cotton Broker. “Keep the tip up! Don’t give him any slack. Keep that tip up! Up——”

In his excitement, the Artist slipped over the edge of the bank. He went into the creek up to his waist. He promptly tripped to his knees. He scrambled out again. A miracle was performed. Perhaps the trout, disgusted to find itself hooked by such a blunderer, lost heart and surrendered—preferring death to life-long shame.



*Pack mule at play—during
working hours*

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

At any rate, after three minutes the Artist, dripping, was doing a war dance over the fish he had dragged to the bank.

It was evening. The rest of the party were preparing to snuggle into the blankets after a long day of riding. Up from the cook-fire came the sound of the Artist's voice. He was addressing the veteran Cruse.

"It was this way," the rest of the party heard the Artist saying. "I had been whipping the stream all day. Not a strike! Not a nibble. And I says to the General, I says: 'I'm going to stay with it if I have to go in swimming to catch 'em. There's fish in this stream,' I says, 'and I'm the lad to get 'em.'

"Well, sir, about noon it looks very bad, what with the sun coming out strong and

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

all. So I take out Leaping Bessie, my favorite fly, with the gilt speckles over a woodcock's feather. I make a perfect cast, if I do say so myself. Which I do. 'Way down the stream. Well, sir, you'll never believe it. All of a sudden——”

There was a smile around the retiring tents. And a yawn. The General winked at the Cotton Broker.

“Another fish hooked,” said the General, “Good night.”



V

“MOM”

“**M**OM” was with us. That’s the boastful male way of putting it. The old, sturdy oak stuff. As a matter of fact, we were with “Mom.”

“Mom” sounds—doesn’t it?—like apple pies still smoking from the oven; like rag rugs; a smoothly polished four-poster with a delightfully crazy quilt; a turkey wing duster hung near the almanac; chicken and dumplings with gravy that has tiny golden specks in it.

Well, “Mom” can be like that.

It doesn’t sound—does it?—like a powerful swimmer who has outraced

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

game fields in competition; like twelve hours in a saddle over a storm-ripped mountain trail; like toting a full pack on a long march; like doing a full share, and a little more, of chores around camp.

Yet, "Mom" is like that, too.

We called her "Mom." Her real name is Mrs. General. And she is one of the staunchest arguments ever registered versus the ancient wail that woman's place is strictly in the home, preferably in the kitchen.

A wail, one regrets to chronicle, that one hears too often from the brethren who boast their prowess on the trail. It is too common a belief among them that a woman's place distinctly is not in camp. With these stalwarts it is tradition that it is a man's world and a man's work—this roughing it in the open.

They would scoff, no doubt, if they

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

were reminded that the “man’s world” in which they live is rather thoroughly conducted by “the little woman” so-called. And they would roar heartily, by the same token, if they were asked to name any task undertaken by man that would halt woman; or that wasn’t made a little lighter by her presence.

No use to remind them that, after all, it is to “the little woman” that they turn with their sorrows and their bad tempers, with their boasts and their need of sympathy.

Sentimental? Maybe so. But Nature didn’t build her mountains, unleash her mighty streams and erect great trees for men alone. If she had she would not have thought to place in this setting the yellow columbine.

But this isn’t designed as argument. We were speaking of Mom. If the sturdy

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

brethren wish, we'll admit Mom is an unusual woman. Let us narrate that for more than three weeks on the trail and off Mom was "Mom" to five excitable boys. Five boys removed for a time from civilization. The youngest of them just past ten and the oldest scampering blithely on the edge of forty. Mom might be able to tell which were the hardest to keep in line.

Mom did it. Three weeks in camp and on the trail is a fierce test of comradeship. In that time a man is somehow revealed. He may fool the world in cities. But if he has any bad traits they will come to the surface in the clean sweep of the sun or in the relentless wash of the rain. Or if there are unsuspected good traits they will shine like the good deed in this naughty, naughty world.

You know a man after three weeks on

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

the trail. Oh, rather, as the Cotton Broker says.

And because—more's the pity—there is so much that is petty and selfish in us all, any time after three days—especially if there has been a good rain—may find the camp in a mood of homicide.

These things are known. Ancient truths.

So well-known that toward the end of our laughing expedition we—we sturdy men-folk—were moved to comment on the fact that in three weeks no throats had been cut, no shots fired from ambush, no sheath knives thrust into inviting backs.

In our red-blooded man's way, of course, we at once put it down to the fact that it was because, after all, we were broad-minded-men-of-the-world. Fellows with hearts of gold under the slick



*"Before us lay alluring weeks
of the open trail"*

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

exterior. Civilized creatures despite our efficiency in the wilderness.

In the largeness of our hearts we may have patted Mom on the head a little bit.

Perhaps Mom smiled a little to herself. Perhaps she, too, was unconscious of the part she had played. Perhaps because she knows men so well she took for granted this unthinking ingratitude.

It was too easy for us to forget that it was Mom who set the cheerful example on cold mornings when the mules were cutting up with especial glee. That no trail was so difficult but Mom's voice was raised in song—great, rollicking songs that smoothed out the rough places and made the sun a little brighter or the rain less wet. That it was Mom who found time to help the cook. That it was Mom who would find the missing, favorite reel in the dunnage mess; who provided dry

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clothes like a magician after a damp day fishing; who had the firewood cut by the time the male hunters returned from the chase; who listened patiently to the boasts of these same male hunters; who admired the strings of fish (Mom fishes each year in the deep sea, herself); who cheered the moody Artist during an attack of sun-down blues; who was never too tired to take the children on a climb to a cave where there might be bears or giants or bandits or something; who explained to the youngsters the ways of field-mice or the habits of birds; who concocted a cup of tea on a rainy afternoon; who helped out with clumsy male clothes-washing; who advised the proper doctoring of sun-burn; who lent a hand with refractory tent pegs; who surprised all hands by bringing a noon-day chocolate ration from her saddle-bags; who pretended to ad-

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

mire ruffian growths of lazy men's whiskers—

The list would fill this little book.

Let the rest be told in the fact that only twice did Mom fall back on her woman's prerogative. Two times when she insisted—as the male camping brethren insist she will sooner or later—on having her own blindfolded way.

The first time she utterly refused to budge a step further on a cloudy day. The second time she calmly took charge of the expedition and insisted on guiding it along an unblazed trail.

The first time, as a result of her obstinacy, we made camp snugly just ahead of a heavy rain that would have kept us in wet, soggy clothes and mouldy bedding for the remainder of our trip.

The second time she saved us from marching down a blind trail on which we

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

would have been lost for a day, if no other worse mishap befell us.

We humored Mom. Oh, yes, we big-hearted men-folks took Mom along. Darn nice of us, too.



VI

STORM MOTIF

STORM clouds piling up on the majestic brim of the Continental Divide. Rumbling across the gray sky to make a setting for a crashing, Wagnerian storm. A sinister muttering in the tops of the trees. A nervous chattering on Beaverdam Creek. The lonely, frightened cry of a solitary bird darting for shelter. A wet feel in the wind that drives down on the camp—a cold feel, too—

In camp we emulate the turtle and draw our heads deep into the collars of sweaters, leather coats and flannel shirts. From this tactical pose we mutter chilly threats

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

to the pack animals. The threat of the gray sky—and its attendant necessity for packing quickly—has inspired them to new cavortings.

We gaze on the lowering sky and squint our left eyes shrewdly. As if the slightest slackening of pace in the dark mass of rolling clouds, or the least change in angle to the far slants of visible rain might change our hefty opinion of the weather.

We decide that it looks a whole lot like rain.

The Artist tries to qualify with the cheerful remark that it won't be much of a rain. The Artist has the annoying habit of being pessimistic in fair weather and optimistic in foul. We are not in a mood for optimists of any sort.

We turn to Cruse Black, who is throwing a diamond hitch that will stay

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

diamond-hitched on the black ringleader of the dod-gasted, pie-biting, bull-headed mules.

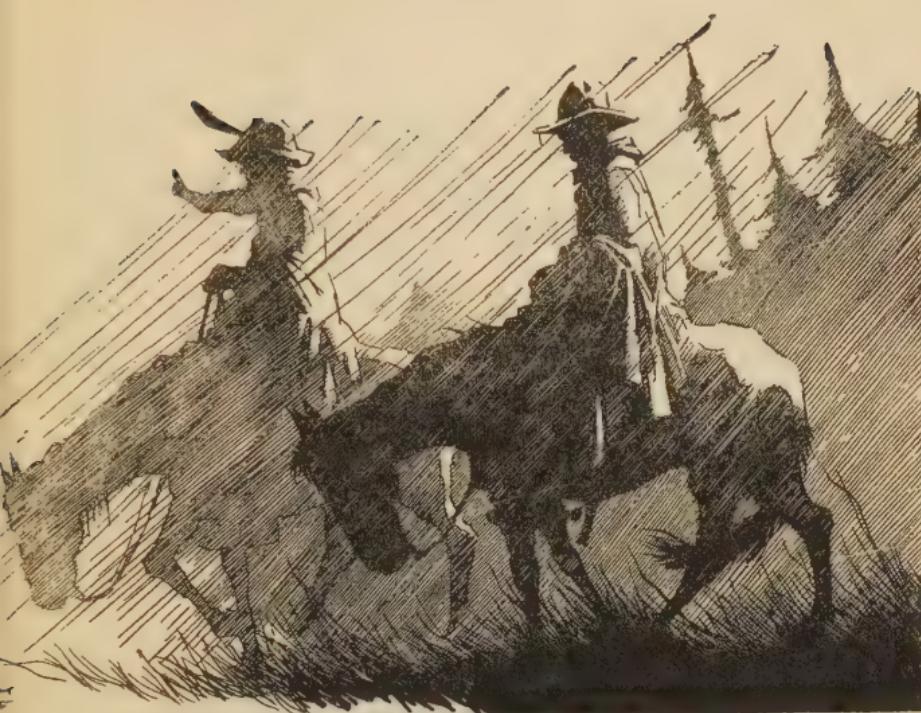
“Yes,” says Cruse, “We sure will have some weather.”

We feel that we have done nobly to reach a decision on which this veteran of the trail agrees so fully.

There comes a rumble from the Divide. The storm orchestra tuning up for its symphony. The ringing of the bell on Day School’s scrawny neck has a melancholy sound. The saddles creak mournfully. The animals, even the mules, become depressed.

We tell them to “hi, there” and other things in a disinterested manner.

We reach a narrow trail skirting the edge of a somber woods. On the right is a swampy settling of land. It is here that the rain reaches out with tentative



*"The rain falls in long,
monotonous slants . . .
the horses hang their
glistening necks"*

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

fingers, to be sure that we are there. Then it rains in earnest.

Ponchos and slickers are whipped off the saddles. The identity of our riders is lost under the rain-proof cloaks. The rain is devoting itself to its appointed task. It falls in long, monotonous slants. It drops with arithmetical precision, seeking for the faulty place in our water-proof armor. And, incidentally, always finding it. The ponchos and slickers gleam dully as they turn the attack of water. Rain drips disconsolately from the soggy brims of our hats. The horses are soaked. They hang their glistening necks. Their manes and tails make somber streamers of mourning.

The wind is whipping the big, outraged trees into a fury. The rain isolates each member of the party. It makes a barrier behind which each man is alone with his

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

thoughts. Rainy day thoughts. Rainy day thoughts under soggy, dripping hat brims.

*“Low bridge, everybody down!
Low bridge, we are coming to a town!”*

Mom is singing. She's riding in the middle of the train. Later we will find out that Mom's waterproof is not so darn waterproof. But now she doesn't complain. She sings. Five boys, from ten to forty, are brooding on rainy day thoughts. Mom has elected to sing. And appropriately enough she has selected a nautical song:

*“For you'll always know your buddy,
And you'll always know your pal:
If you've ever navigated
On the Erie Canal!”*

The Artist, who has been planing a picture to be called “The Embrace of the

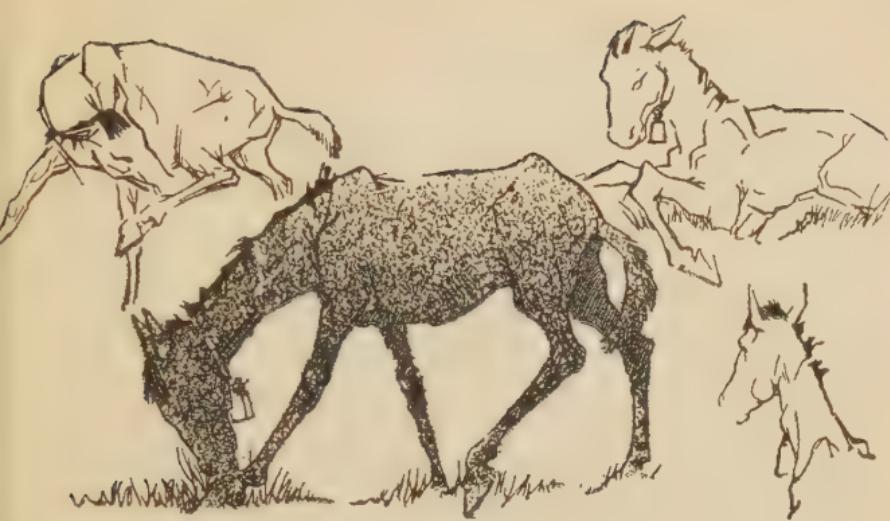
ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

Grave," slowly joins in the rousing chorus. The Cotton Broker, who has been wondering why he left his yacht anchored on the comparatively dry Atlantic coast to make this journey, finds the answer to his question. He roars out the song of the Erie Canal admiral.

Dave and Ralphie pipe up with choir-boy voices. Even the General sings. That is, the General calls it singing—

The rain draws off for a while. It can't fool us. It is coaxing us to take off our slickers and ponchos so it can sneak up and smite us when we are without protection. We laugh—and sing other songs. And make amazing jokes.

Early in the afternoon we make camp. We set it up in a hurry, too. The water in the turbulent creek is churned yellow. The trees are bending in a mad dance.



*"Day School," the colt, destined,
we hope, to grow up and be a
better beast on the trail than
her mother*

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

When the storm breaks again we are under cover. Except the General. The General is out fishing. He would be out fishing if we were camped in one of the more arid spots of the Sahara. The General never could see what there was to laugh at in Simple Simon's fishing for a whale when all the water he had got was in his mother's pail.

The rest of the expedition is under cover. Mom has provided piping hot tea. Our blankets are dry. We have a rousing fire that Mom started.

The Cotton Broker and the Artist, under the lean-to, decide to pay an afternoon call on Mom's green wigwam. No use leaving Mom all alone in her tent with only Dave and Ralphie for company. It's all right to say that she must expect to share equally the hardships of a camping trip. But, after all, she is a

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

woman. The Artist and the Cotton Broker will visit and cheer up her day with their presence.

Just incidentally, the Artist takes along his poncho, in which a hole has been torn by the saddle. Mom has some way of mending it with strips of adhesive tape. Fifteen minutes and the task is done.

The Artist, by way of brightening the dark hour, is laying down his inexorable judgment of Art, men, women, morals, politics, the European situation—

Mom listens patiently.

The Cotton Broker has borrowed Mom's warmest, white woolly sweater with the shawl collar. He demands song. Lots of songs. Sentimental ballads.

Mom sings. The rain makes a friendly obbligato of tiny drums on the tent. The tumbling, yellow creek lends it voice.

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

The trees bend closer to catch the
harmony—

A rainy day in a snug camp. Surely
this moment is the best in a camping trip
off the trail.

EQUESTRIAN
SILHOUETTE—



VII

CIVILIZATION

FOR fourteen days we have been on and off the trail. In that time, since we left the Buffalo Ranch, we have seen no one outside of our party. We feel a good deal like Stanley in darkest Africa. And a little bit like Lewis and Clark who, the General has informed the Artist, were not a firm of Portland grocers.

“Rather not,” says the Cotton Broker, “They were a vaudeville team, like Gallagher and Sheehan.”

We surely felt some of the thrill of the explorer and pioneer when we crossed the Continental Divide after a day of trails

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

which had been all but obliterated by recent storms. We had the feeling of discoverers after riding across the marshy, merely moist beginning of the Snake River and later watching it grow into a roaring, quarrelsome mountain stream.

We are quite at home in our tents and at peace with the world. We sort of feel that if the world will let us alone we're quite willing to reciprocate. We are just a little curious, though, about our reactions when we get into touch with civilization again.

We are headed that way today. Our grub is running low. The mules, Carl says, are not carrying enough pack to keep them on the ground. So we are heading into Snake River where, Mr. Albright informed us, there would be fresh supplies.

At Snake River the General expects

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

messages. He is mildly interested in another campaign—his business interests back home. The Cotton Broker might be expected to be concerned about the market. The Artist has no business—

Far down the valley the flutter of red and white and blue, brave against the solid background of evergreens. The flag! We have all the emotion at sight of it that comes to travellers returning from a foreign land.

Unconsciously, our little cavalcade smartens its pace. Lena's grub boxes clatter triumphantly. Overhead a great eagle soars toward the sun. He completes the national symbol. The flag and the eagle.

Snake River is a wide and rolling, deep river here. Our familiar little, chummy stream now bars our progress. Lena is all for leaping madly into the deepest

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

part. We dissuade her. We search for a ford and find it.

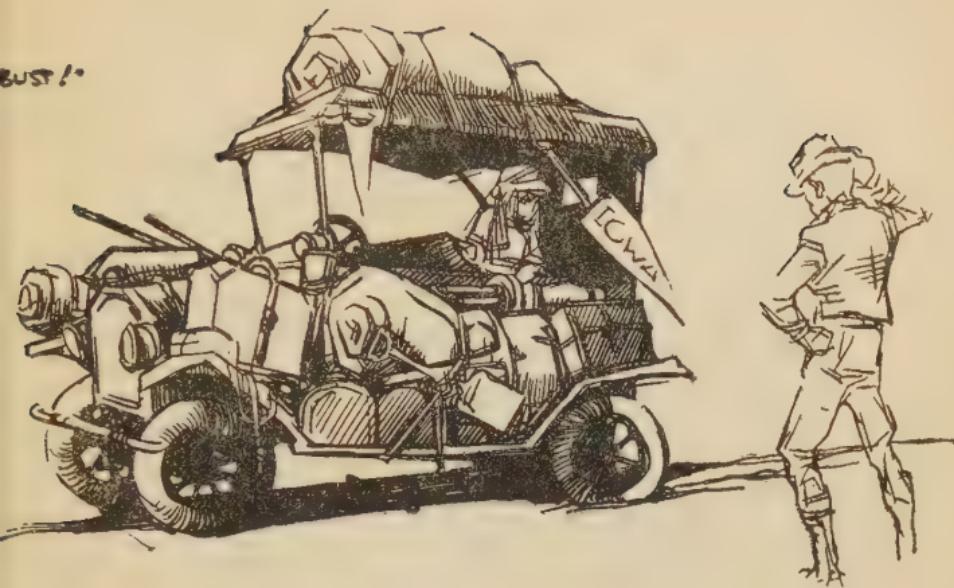
“Oh, lookit!” from Dave. “An automobile!”

We gaze in wonder. Sure enough—an automobile. That’s what they call them. On the road that runs past the Ranger station.

We splash across the Snake and pitch our temporary camp on its high bank above the station. The automobile tourists observe us with curiosity. We are haughtily indifferent.

Not least among all the wonders of Yellowstone is that automobile tourist. As a matter of fact, in one way or another they all get about by auto. If it isn’t their own individual rig, it’s the big yellow busses of the hotel company, which whisk them around about the Park so comfortably.

BUST! •



*"Not least among the wonders
of Yellowstone is the auto-
mobile tourist"*

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

“How silly to ride horseback.”

“Absurd to go way off on those paths where there’s nothing to see.”

“No beds.”

“And when it rains! . . .”

Those things one can almost hear them say. Absurd? Perhaps—and yet. . . .

We observe them with curiosity. Somehow, an auto tourist, especially out where the vest begins (the sartorial pun is the General’s) is apt to be curious to look upon. Their rigs are so amazingly—so amusingly—diversified. High heels and silk stockings with ninety-eight cent khaki bloomers and thirty-six dollar Stetson hats and flaming kerchiefs. Oh, every clothing combination one could imagine—and many unimaginable.

But no funnier than the dude ranchers and the professional wild and woolly westerners. The synthetic shieks of the



"We observe them with curiosity"

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

silver-studded saddle. The bold, bad boys who hang about the hotels. Movie stuff plus. Bill Hart and Will Rogers all Tom-mixed. Saddle slouch and studied bow legs. There, if ever, one sees the lily gilded. Chaps, sombreros, quirts, spurs, riding boots, bandanas—*n' everything*.

After all, why not? Sound theatrical properties, and, doubtless profitable. And what blessed contrast a man like Carl, minus all frills. Not even a Buffalo Bill bandana. He emerged from his little Montana ranch, his only footwear a thin-soled pair of “store shores.” So unpicturesque, Carl and Cruse. But how well they know horses and the ways of handling them, and the lore of pack saddles and the trail!

The General and the Artist—who has become orderly, in the military sense—canter over to the Ranger station.

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

“Expected you last night,” says Lee Cottrell. “Got your grub all ready any time you bring up your pack animals.”

There is a sheaf of letters, telegrams and transmitted cables for the General. He reads them. Later we find out that there is bad news in these communications. Bad business news. In the General’s absence one of his pet deals seems to be on the point of collapsing.

As he reads it, an air of troubled pre-occupation masks the General’s face. He gazes off into the sky and watches a white cloud shredding itself in the wind. A worried frown cuts a perpendicular line over the bridge of his nose.

His orderly, the Artist, watches and makes a mental sketch. Thus Leonardo da Vinci, always the artist, watched the lines made on the countenance of a grief-stricken friend. Thus the other great

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

artist studied the faces of the mob even as his own masterpieces were burned in the public square by the Jury of Innocents.

The mask behind which the great leaders of business struggle with their problems. The General speaks.

"Are you sure there's some prunes in that mess of grub?" he asks. "And we got to be sure about the tea and some canned tomatoes. Last thing Mom said was——"

.

There is news of a great national calamity, too, at Snake River. They inform the Artist about it almost incidentally. It is old news at the Station. The calamity seems to indicate a terrific upset of the market. News that should be of paramount interest to the Cotton Broker, whose life is the market.

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

It might even break up his trip. He could motor from here to West Yellowstone, get the overnight train there, wire Dan Spencer of the Union Pacific for reservation out of Salt Lake——

The Artist gallops back to camp with all the speed of a messenger with calamitous news. The General stays behind to carry out Mom's orders about prunes and things. The Artist finds the Cotton Broker casting diligently into the Snake River.

He calls his momentous news to the fishing enthusiast. Who casts again with deliberation.

“What do I care?” he says to the Artist, who is stunned.

“But the market?” he protests.

“What market?” demands the Cotton Broker.

The Artist mutters to himself. He has

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

been robbed of a dramatic scene. He represents it. He plans a final cast of his own to get a strike from the Cotton Broker's emotions.

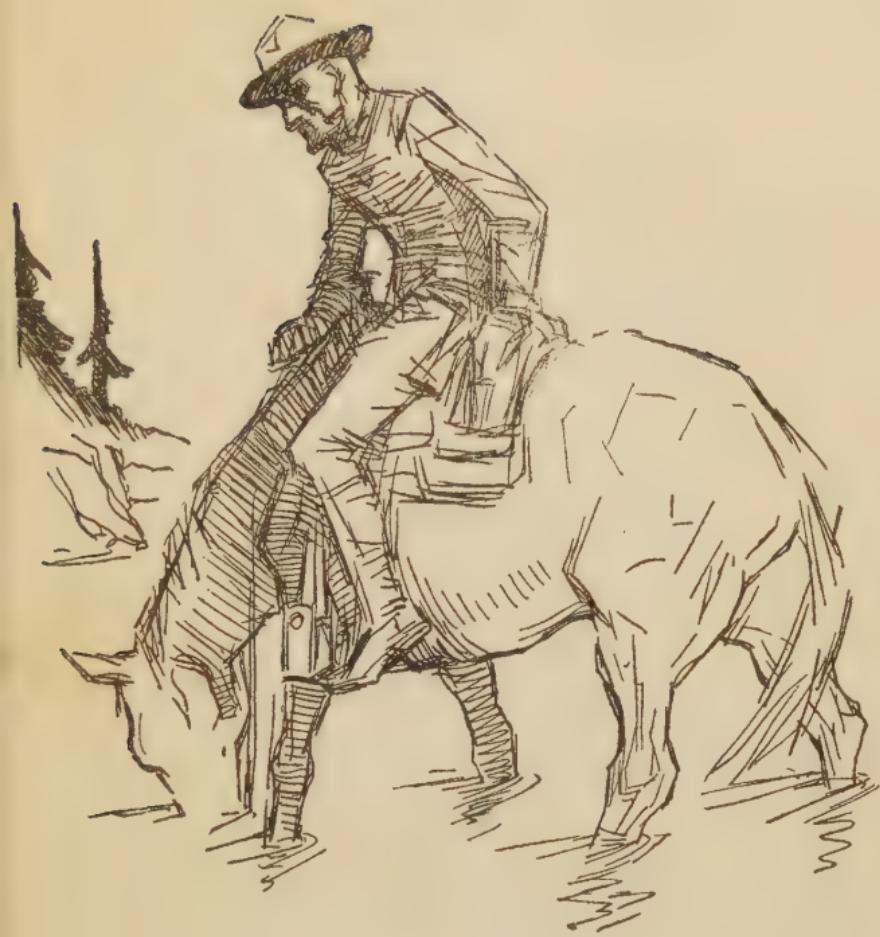
"Anyway," he declares, "Mr. Cottrell at the ranger station says there hasn't been a fish caught in this section of the Snake River in five years."

"Well," the Cotton Broker replies calmly, "it's about time there was. This may be the day—"

• • • • •

We have been at Snake River station until late in the afternoon. We have laughed at the strange rigs of the motor tourists. We have packed our mules—they pretend to be awfully frightened at the motors—and we have hit the trail again.

Lee Cottrell has ridden with us. His



*"Rangers kept appearing
on our trail to take care
of us"*

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

big snowy-white pack animal, looking like the horse on which the enchanted princess might ride away in a fairy tale, is at the head of our column.

It is close to sundown. We are snugly encamped at Mountain Ash Creek. Satisfying noises and smells from Cruse's cook fire. A shout from down the stream tells us that the General is seeking the grandfather of all trout again. At our feet the creek is singing the song we know.

Dave and Ralphie are bending over their diaries, which seem to be written best lying flat on the ground and chewing the end of the pencil. Mom is down at the cook's fire making sure there is chocolate—

A fragrant breeze floats out of the woods—Mom is singing:

*“All the world loves a lover
So the old proverb goes—”*

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

Contentment. The sense of well-being like a soft, familiar garment. Surely this moment is the best in a camping trip.

"This," says the Cotton Broker, stretching his arms as if to embrace the scene, "is the bally life, what?"

The Artist, his technique employed with a can of saddle soap and his boots, grins at the Cotton Broker.

"Oh, rather," he parrots.

We are home again.



VIII

PERSPECTIVE

“NEVER have I looked upon a homelier man,” declared the Artist. “And when I utter these words they are heavy with meaning. I have the artist eye. I have the authority of Leonardo da Vinci, Mike Angelo and Benvenuto Cellini in back of me. And I say never have I looked upon a homelier man. I have spoken.”

The Artist was muttering savagely as he unrolled his blankets. He punctuated his remarks with swift, annihilating gestures. Mosquitoes! Hungry, humming, malicious swarms of them. The gestures

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

were aimed at the mosquitoes rather than to illustrate the bitter discourse.

We protested the words. As we did we also slapped at mosquitoes. Perhaps they robbed our protests of their righteous warmth. But we really wished the Artist wouldn't carry on in that way. After all, Superintendent Albright was mighty decent to see that rangers kept popping up on our trail to look after us. And it was churlish and rude for the Artist thus to assail the personal appearance of the latest ranger, who had ridden over from the Bechler River station to be our guide for a few days.

“Hospitality or no hospitality!” the Artist said stubbornly. “I have spoken!

“And when you come right down to it these are very low grade mosquitoes. Back in civilization mosquitoes are gamer and more clever. They give you a good

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

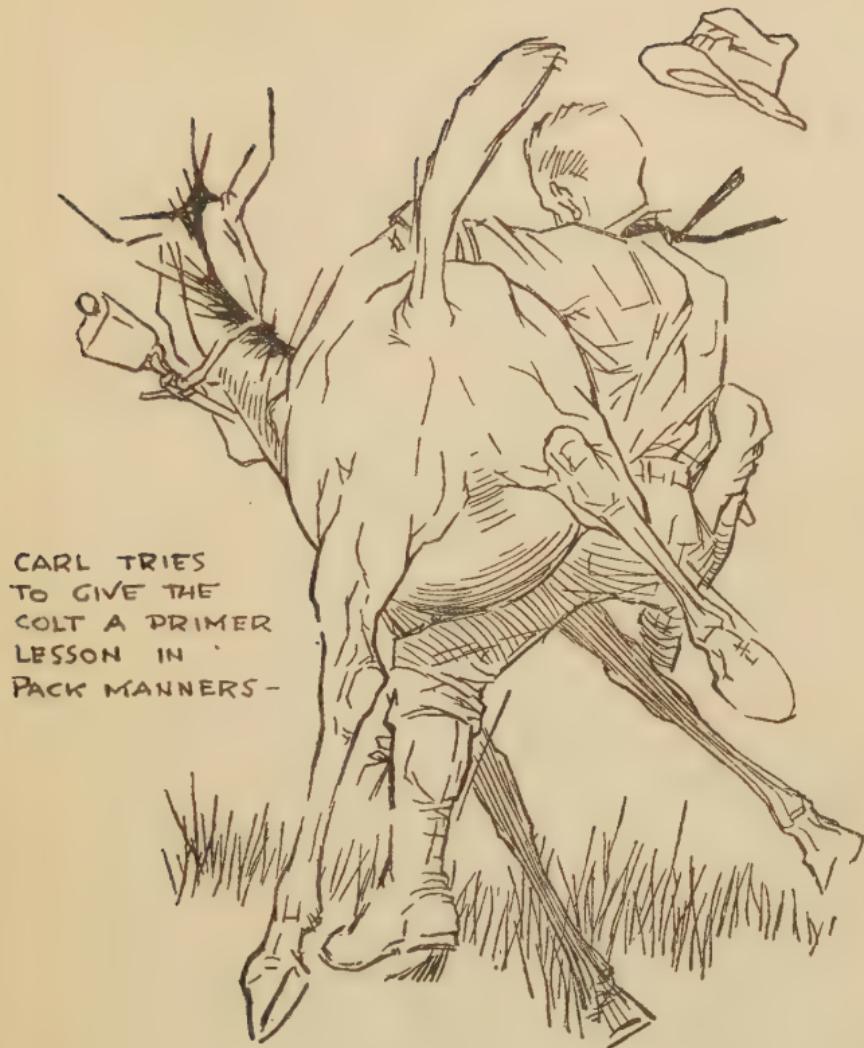
fight. But these sluggish, unintelligent beasts! It's no trick to kill 'em. Child could do it. But there's so gosh-blamed many of 'em!"

It was the mosquitoes that really chased the Artist's temperamental goat into the open and made it bleat. That and the long ride we had had, through marshy land, harassed by giant horse-flies.

"These flies will weigh half a pound, dressed," Carl had declared. And it didn't seem outlandish exaggeration, either.

For all of this the Artist blamed the Ranger from Bechler River station—and more! For, after a morning slopping through a swamp and fighting the winged, stinging varmints we made what promised to be our first downright uncomfortable camp.

We found ourselves tangled in a depressing jungle. A thin thread of water,



*Carl and that colt were
both born athletes*

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

hiding in brambled brush higher than our heads. Lumpy ground that was soft—and as sinister—to the tread as the carpet in an undertaker's shop. Trees that seemed, in their towering age, to have lost the grandeur of years for a melancholy brooding. They mumbled as the wind hit them with a surly threat of storm.

As the Ranger from Bechler River station left us late in the afternoon he seemed to sense that we were depressed in spirit. He was going back to the station to tell Mrs. Ranger that he would be gone for a few days with a strange outfit. He sought to cheer us up.

“The mosquitoes are getting better,” said he. “A couple of weeks ago you couldn’t have made camp here, at all.”

The Artist was struck absolutely speechless. But he recovered. To revile the personal appearance of that Ranger.

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

The rest of the party gave the Artist plenty of room. Mom took Dave and Ralphie up to Ouzel Falls, half a mile away, and they had a great time looking for the place where the cattle rustlers used to hide. The General and the Cotton Broker fished a vein of the Bechler River. Cruse concocted a fish chowder. The Artist sulked in the General's tent.

He braced up a bit over the chowder which he ate with his head wrapped in one of Mom's colorful scarfs. He seemed cheered by the fact that an army of rain, with the slanting precision of rifles in well-drilled troops, was marching across the plain to attack the camp.

He went to his blankets with gloomy forecasts of a sleepless, painful damp night for all hands——

And as he spoke a sharp gust of wind

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

drove across the camp, followed by a steady, delightful breeze. It drove the mosquitoes before it. Thereafter none of the winged nuisances was seen, heard or felt.

The army of rain, which reached the edge of camp, did an unexpected about-face and retreated.

Morning dawned with a bath of liquid gold distilled through the pure, silent green of the trees. Cruse did some especial tricks with the trout caught the night before. There was magic in the air.

Even the mules were moved by it. They did everything decent but walk into camp and pack themselves. The General found the missing book of flies, lost for days in the shifting of packs.

We were ready for the saddle and the trail when the Ranger from Bechler River rode back to join us.

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

A short floundering through another swamp and we began to climb. A succession of glorious waterfalls. And tempestuous rapids. Stone banks carved in deep, splendid lines by the sculpturing hands of the rushing, powerful waters. An amazing vista at Three River Junction. A dip in a natural tub. The noon-day meal on the mesa overlooking the joyous shouting union of rivers.

Always in the Yellowstone we marvelled at the variety of country spread before us. Our camps were never the same two nights in a row, save when we made our last stop near Shoshone Lake, on the edge of the Shoshone Geyser basin. We stayed there three days.

Camping off the trail in Yellowstone has one major drawback. It spoils you forever for camping in any other country.

Memory goes back over some of our



SNOWSHOE CABIN
SHOSHONE GEYSER
BASIN —

*"Camping in Yellowstone spoils
you for camping in any other
country"*

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

camping places. Our first night out of Buffalo Ranch in the hush of the woods' heart, with the twisting trail above us. Pelican Creek, perched on a tiny bluff with the curving creek sprawled out before us like a leaden serpent and the moon making the mountains in back of us into a silver-tipped, ragged silhouette.

On the shore of Yellowstone Lake: a sunset that was emotional in its splendor; a bank of green forest at our backs; the soothing song of the lake's placid waves for a lullaby. Perched on the side of the Continental divide. The slope of Mountain Ash Creek. The operatic setting on Beaverdam—

Each camp a little hint of the camper's paradise; each different from yesterday's camp and different from tomorrow's. Always plenty water, wood and fodder.

It was quite a stupendous comparison

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

for the last stage of our journey to stand.
The last stage along the Bechler.

A turning, gentle, hill trail from Three River Junction. Rocky, rugged banks curbing the passion of the river. Long stretches of country that Remington loved to paint with the liveliest colors on his palette. A breathless pass with the silver trunks of dead trees against a sky of flawless blue.

To ride at last on to the shore of Shoshone Lake, beautiful and blue. Words are empty trying to catch the clear, deep color of that jewel of waters. As paint must never hope to capture the splendor of the sacred, living light that gleams just under its surface.

There was no doubt about where our camp would be after the Ranger from Bechler River station guided us to the shore of Shoshone Lake.

TIMBER
LINE



ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

Incidentally, he remained with us until we came out three days later at Old Faithful. He and the Artist became great pals. He admired the Artist's technique in sketches of pack-animals. And the others saw the Artist patiently trying to learn the technique of wood-chopping from the Ranger.

The second evening the Artist and the Cotton Broker were watching the after-glow of the day's departing die in a rose-and-gold surge of light against the hills to the East. They were also cleaning the latest catch of fish.

"Do you know," queried the Artist, "that the Ranger from Bechler River station is great people?"

"Rather," said the Cotton Broker. "I never knew the fact has been disputed."

"Not only that," said the Artist, "but

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

do you know there is something of beauty
in that fellow's face?"

The Cotton Broker gasped.

"Yes, sir," said the Artist. "A head
you might call noble. The sort of thing
the old Greek boys tried so hard to get.
A certain setting of the eyes, too, and a
line along his lips——"

Deliberately, the Cotton Broker picked
up a fair-sized trout and hurled it at the
Artist.



IX

THE LAST DAY OUT

OUR last camp. Tomorrow we hit the trail that will take us homeward.

Tonight, although we are trying our best to be light-hearted and laughing, we are a little sad and low in spirit.

It has been a great day, this last one we are to have before we reach clothes and telephones again, business excitements, being polite to people, railroad trains, taxicabs, doing things by time-table.

We are not quite sure what day of the week it is. We are not much interested. For two weeks no two watches in the outfit have agreed within fifty minutes of

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

each other. We do know that it is our last day—

The General started the last day, as he began the first one, with a fishing expedition. As a result we have had a final fish chowder. We clamored for one last chowder with the craving that resembled that usually associated with drug users.

It has been a great day. The Cotton Broker and Carl, the Wrangler, have topped off breakfast with an acrobatic performance. A surprising, mutual knack of doing contortionist stunts has made them quite chummy.

We just loafed around gloriously most of the morning. Before noon we saddled and set out for Shoshone Lake, where we had discovered a perfect bathing beach. We had a noisy party, howling at the cold slap of the Shoshone's frigid water. Racing along the beach—

ON YELLOWSTONE TRAILS

The water was so blue that it seemed surprising that some of the color did not cling to the bodies that came out, gleaming, to the friendly embrace of the sun.

A racing ride back to camp and the noon-day meal. During the scamper the Cotton Broker performed monkey drill tricks that he learned with a certain famous cavalry organization.

We were a long time at the noonday meal. It wasn't only our enormous appetites, either. We were beginning to cling to our associations. In the afternoon we visited again the Shoshone geysers, on the edge of which basin we were camped. Always a little primitive thrill about close contact with these spouting, grumbling geysers—these fantastically-colored, boiling pools—like living on the edge of a Doré etching—

Sundown found us silent, roaming

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about the camp aimlessly or suddenly huddling together in a silent group, an instinctive desire for companionship in the wilderness and a prolonging of the farewell that must soon be spoken.

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Tonight we are trying our best to be light-hearted and cheerful. A glowing fire in front of the General's tent is doing its best to help us. It makes our faces ruddy and bright as we lie on the blanket rolls in a half-circle. It turns the trunks of the big trees into stately, colored columns of an Egyptian temple.

We talk a long while about our many camps. We review incidents of our journey. Our way of speaking would give a stranger the impression that all these occurrences had been spread out over years. If there had been an unpleasant

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incident during the expedition, it cannot be recalled by us now—

Because it is the last night out, Cruse Black and Carl do not wait on ceremony. Nor the Ranger from Bechler River. They accept our invitation to join us at the fire. Usually they remain aloof or come just close enough to hear Mom's songs, some of which Carl has learned.

She sings for us now. All sorts of songs. She knows scores of them. Old favorites, ballads, revival hymns—

The Cotton Broker is called on for a dance. A Spanish dance. Mom and the Artist become a string orchestra; with castanets and a tambourine, if gestures mean anything. The Cotton Broker dances—he really does dance mighty well—an abandoned, wild, swinging dance at the fire's edge.

We roar our applause. But there is a



NIGHT
CAMP

*"A glowing fire in
front of the General's
tent . . ."*

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solemnity in the air. It's the last night. In back of every laugh there stalks the reminder that tomorrow night there will be no gay group around a fire—

Dave and Ralphie are taking advantage of last night's laxity. They are staying awake despite sleepy eyes that keep gently closing. They last through one of Cruse Black's wild animal stories, a snowshoe yarn by the Ranger from Bechler River and an army narrative of Carl's. These three take their leave. And with them, the youngsters.

The rest of us linger awhile. The fire is dying—

Mom softly sings a little, favorite song. Overhead the reaching boughs of the trees make coarse, black lace against the soft sky. The stars seem very close and friendly.

The perfume of the woods burdens the scarcely stirring breeze. From the

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meadow comes the sound of horses stealthily moving in the dark. A tinkle of a bell. On Day School's scrawny neck. We smile—

The fire makes fitful plays of color. The night chill creeps up as the blaze fades. There'll be frost. Time for the blankets. Can't stay up forever, even if it is the last night out.

We stand up, silently. We look around us intently, as if to capture and hold in our memories forever all we can of this loved picture—

We say "goodnight." Then for some reason or other—we have never done it before—we all clasp hands. Our farewell over our last camp fire, which is burning itself into pure, white ashes and leaving behind it the aroma that is sweet and unforgettable.

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On the trail in Yellowstone

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